

Ancient Cyprus: Island of Conflict?

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Abstract

This thesis examines the island of Cyprus during the sixth to fourth centuries B.C. The hypothesis is that during this period, Cyprus had a number of distinct political entities which aligned themselves according to self-interest and the pursuit of economic prosperity. Cyprus was divided into city-kingdoms which were governed by individual monarchs; they were not traditional Greek *poleis*. But too often, scholars apply broad and general Hellenic political concerns that are not always valid for the island's locality and circumstances. There is a *communis opinio* that the island was continuously oppressed by greater powers and that all its states desired unification with the Greek mainland. Certainly Cyprus had a large Greek population and ties to the Hellenic world cannot be refuted. However, to suggest that these ties controlled the objectives and political agendas of the island's individual city-kingdoms is to ignore the diversity of her population and the economic imperative to connect with Egypt and the Levantine coast.

In order to build a clear and balanced perspective of Cypriot political history, the island's circumstances need to be examined in both the broader context of the eastern Mediterranean and at a local level. This research employs a diachronic and thematic approach examining firstly, Cyprus' internal dynamics, commercial character and representation prior to the Persian period; secondly, the nature of Cyprus' relationship with Persia and the extent of local agency; thirdly, Cyprus' interaction with the Greek mainland in the fifth century B.C.; and finally, the reign of Evagoras I, powerful ruler of the city-kingdom of Salamis from 411 – 374/3 B.C. This research demonstrates that local political agendas were much more influenced by the need to co-exist and trade with the Near East and Asia than by ideological motives of ethnicity and nationalism. Above all they were dictated by the material interests of the island's city-kingdoms and the personal ambitions of individual monarchs.

Declaration

I, Maria Ioannou certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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